Scheme for Promotion of Women's Cooperatives in Gujarat

3996. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are implementing any Central Scheme for promoting Women's Cooperatives in Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the funds released to Women's Cooperatives in the State during the last three years; year-wise; and

(d) the results achieved thereform?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government of India has been implementing Central Sector Scheme, "Assistance to Women's Cooperatives" since 1993-94 throughout the country including Gujarat. The scheme aims at bringing about improvement in the socio-economic status of women by providing assured work through cooperative societies undertaking activities in agro-based/ commercial/industrial fields enabling them to augment their income.

(c) The funds released are as indicated below:—

(Rs. in lakhs)

Year	Amount
1995-96	Nill
1996-97	Nill
1997-98	3.52
TOTAL:	3.52

(d) It is too early to evaluate the scheme. However, the assisted primary women cooperative societies are expected to increase their business activities.

Cotton Producing Area in the Country

3997. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the cotton producing area in the country has been shrinking during the last five years;

(b) if so, the area under cotton crop during these years;

(c) the reasons for this shrinkage; and

(d) the steps Government propose to take to ensure restoration of cotton producing area in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The area under cotton in the country during the last five years has been consistently increasing except in 1997-98. The year-wise cotton area is given below:—

(In lakh hectares)

Year	Area
1993-94	73.21
1994-95	78.71
1995-96	90.35
1996-97	91.22
1997-98	87.43

(c) The shrinkage of cotton area during 1997-98 is mainly attributed to delayed onset of South West monsoon in 1997 and deficient rains in parts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

(d) The government is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme viz. Intensive Cotton Development Programme (ICDP) in 11 major cotton growing States with the basic objective to increase production and productivity of cotton.

Modernisation of Agriculture

3998. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan to modernise the agriculture so that crops dependence on nature and vagaries of weather playing havoc with the agriculture could be gradually eliminated;

(b) whether our Research and Development capabilities for agriculture are being further reoriented in this direction;

(c) whether efforts are being made for simple credit facilites to farmers; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof so that recent farmers' suicide syndrome should not repeat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) The following efforts are being made to reduce the dependence of agriculture on the vagaries of nature:—

(1) Developing varieties/hybrids of crops which can withstand the fluctuations in weather and climatic conditions and are of shorter duration.

(2) Advising farmers on the measures to be followed during different climatic/ weather conditions.

(b) Efforts are being made to promote mechanisation in selected field operations such as seed bed preparation, sowing/planting, spraying and dusting, harvesting, threshing and drying of crops for timely field operations. Micro-irrigation is also pursued to economise on water usage in crop raising.

(c) and (d) With a view to increasing the flow of credit and ensuring its timely availability to farmers, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has initiated the following measures—

(i) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has been requested to formulate a model credit card scheme for the farmers to enable them to secure production credit without difficulties.

(ii) NABARD has been requested to relax its norms relating to minimum recovery for sanction of credit limits.

(iii) Instructions have been issued to banks for the disposal of loan applications upto Rs. 26,000/- within a fortnight and those above Rs, 25,000/- within 8-9 weeks;

(iv) Appropriate sanctioning powers to rural Branch Managers have been delegated, so that majority of loan application from the weaker sections are sanctioned at Branch level;

(v) With a view to improving the access of small and marginal farmers to institutional credit, cooperative banks have been advised to earmark funds in favour of small, marginal and economically weaker farmers.

Handling of Natural Calamities

3999. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any detailed drill has been made by various Government agencies for handling natural calamities in view of the huge loss of human lives and property in the cyclones over the years;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and why it was not possible to save the human lives by timely evacuation to safer places in the recent Gujarat cyclone havoc; and

(c) whether it is attributable to system failure or an instance of inefficient management crisis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) India Meteorological Department (IMD) is the nodal agency for Cyclone warning in the country. According to the IMD, the Indian cyclone warning system is recognised as one of the best in the world. The genesis of tropical cyclones over Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal and their further movement and Development is monitored and tracked through Indian National Satellite (INSAT) and through Polar Orbiting US Satellities. When the cyclone is near the coast, it is monitored through cyclone Detection Radars. IMD have plans to replace some of the cyclone detection radars with latest State of Art Technology Doppler Radars in the 9th Plan period. Four High Wind Speed Recorders are in operation and twenty more are proposed to be installed during the 9th plan period. In the INSAT series, a new satellite, INSAT 2E is slated to be launched during this year. These new inputs are expected to further enhance their cyclone monitoring and forecasting capability.

In addition, INSAT Satellite based cyclone warning system which is known as Cyclone warning Dissemination System (CWDS) has also been developed through which the cyclone warnings are directly disseminated to the areas likely to affected by the cyclone. According to the IMD, Tropical cyclones, particularly those of very severe intensity are natural phenomena with extremely high potential for damage to property and loss of life and hence the heavy loss of life due to recent cyclone in Gujarat cannot be attributed to any system failure.